



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR HOWARD COUNTY

For Immediate Release:

Contact: T. Wayne Kirwan, 410-313-2108
wkirwan@howardcountymd.gov

February 7, 2018

Laurel Man Convicted in 2013 Home Invasion

The last of three men charged with a violent home invasion that took place in Laurel in November 2013 has been convicted. Jason Jarvis Everette Starks, 22, formerly of the 8800 block of Hawthorne Lane, Laurel, entered an Alford plea to conspiracy to commit robbery, first-degree assault, and first-degree burglary in Howard County Circuit Court on Monday. An Alford plea is a guilty plea that a defendant makes as part of a plea bargain, without actually admitting guilt but conceding that the state has sufficient evidence to convict.

According to police and prosecutors, three men smashed the rear, sliding glass door in the basement of a home located in the 9300 block of Decatur Road in Laurel on November 7, 2013. The men wore black ski masks and were holding what appeared to be handguns when they ordered the four victims to the ground and robbed them of \$300 cash, a quarter-ounce of marijuana, a jacket, an iPhone and truck keys. Two of the intruders assaulted the resident of the home using the same claw hammer used to smash the slider. Another victim was kicked in the head.

In 2014, the Howard County Police Department was notified that the DNA recovered from clothing left at the scene matched the DNA of Marques Nico Lucas, which had been collected due to another case. Further investigation confirmed a vehicle belonging to Lucas' grandmother was used to transport the suspects to and from the home invasion, and a cell phone linked to Lucas connected him to the second subject, Tavian Ruffin. In 2016, Ruffin's DNA was located on clothing items also left at the Laurel home.

The remaining suspect, Jason Starks was identified in text messages appearing in a forensic examination of Ruffin's cell phone. He was arrested after police linked his DNA with a pair of eye glasses left in the victim's home. Starks had texted Ruffin a few hours after the home invasion, looking for his missing glasses.

Howard County Assistant State's Attorney Devora Kirschner told Judge Richard S. Bernhardt that she will seek a prison sentence of 20 years, suspending all but five years at Starks' sentencing hearing on June 1. Marques Lucas, 27 of Laurel, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit robbery, first-degree assault and first-degree burglary in September 2015 and is serving a 15-year prison sentence. Tavian Ruffin, 23 of Elkridge, pleaded guilty to the same charges in September 2016 and is serving a 10-year prison sentence.

#